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BABENHAUSEN COMMUNITY LEARNS ABOUT VALOR DURING MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS' VISIT

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BABENHAUSEN, Germany -- Soldiers and community members here got a first-hand lesson on the significance of America's highest award for heroism when three Medal of Honor recipients visited recently.



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Korean War Medal of Honor recipient Rodolfo Hernandez poses for a photo with Boy Scouts during a visit to Babenhausen, Germany's military community. Hernandez was one of three Medal of Honor recipients who visited with the troops, Boy Scouts and community members.

The veterans, one who earned the Medal of Honor in Vietnam and two who earned theirs in the Korean War, spent an afternoon visiting the community June 16.

The veterans chatted with Soldiers, Boy Scouts, and other community members, and spoke about the experiences and actions that earned them the medal.

Units here hauled out equipment for the visit, including a Multiple Launch Rocket System launcher and a Patriot missile system. The veterans fired a round each from a Pack 75mm howitzer, a cannon used in World War II and the Korean War but now dedicated to salutes for dignitaries.

"It brings the past to the present," said Maj. Daniel Middleton of V Corps'41st Field Artillery Brigade. "We are very glad to have them and have the kids meet these great war heroes."

Middleton said what he did during a tour in Operation Iraqi Freedom pales in comparison to the veterans' achievements.

"These guys are really outstanding, true war heroes," he said.

As the Soldiers commended the veterans, the veterans had their own agendas for the visit.

"The visit is to give each and every one of these Soldiers here a hug and tell them how much I appreciate what they are doing," said Sammy Davis of Flat Rock, Ill. "We've been blessed with good kids in America. Luckily, it's my job to come over and relay that message and thank them for the excellent job they are doing."

Davis said he travels overseas several times each year to visit with the Soldiers and recently visited those wounded in Iraq at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

"What do you tell these kids? I've been there, so I know that there's really nothing that anyone can say, so I gave them a hug and told them that I loved them."

Davis earned his Medal of Honor for his actions in Vietnam, west of Cai Lay, Nov. 18, 1967. Then a private first class with the 2nd Battalion, 4th Artillery Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, Davis assisted in driving the enemy back during an attack on the remote fire support base. Despite being shot several times, Davis continued to fire a

damaged howitzer. Later, he crossed a river on an air mattress, even though he couldn't swim, to rescue several wounded comrades.

"It means a lot that they are here," said Cpl. Yancy Hampton, Delta Battery, 5th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, 69th ADA Brigade. "It's unbelievable to meet people like that, because I never thought that I would meet a Medal of Honor recipient or from a war from back then. It's just an honor."

Hampton said he recently returned from participating in with his unit in events commemorating the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in Normandy, France. There he met many veterans from World War II.

"It makes me wonder if I'll ever be in their shoes one day. I don't know if I'd be able to do the things they did so that's why I commend them."

Ronald Rosser, Medal of Honor recipient from Columbus, Ohio, also made the trip to chat with the troops.

"It means everything to me, because I'm an old Soldier," said Rosser. "I spent my whole life in the military and I love to talk to these kids. When I look at them I see me sometimes."

Rosser received the medal for his actions on June 27, 1952 in the Korean War. Then a corporal with the Heavy Mortar Company, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, he killed more than 20 Chinese soldiers with grenades and another 28 with rifle fire while taking a hill held by an enemy battalion near the town of Ponggilli.

Rosser has been back to Korea 10 times since the war, and is planning another trip in August to visit with troops.

"It's pretty honorable that they'd come out here and do this," said Pvt. 2 Matthew Huttner, also from Delta Battery. "My Dad was a veteran of Vietnam, and just knowing the things that they have gone through and that they are still able to come out here and visit, that's pretty powerful. It's pretty amazing to meet people who have been around for a while and done things that are unthinkable."

